

Message

From: Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality [rwilbur@mdeq.ms.gov]
Sent: 7/5/2018 1:40:04 PM
To: Marraccini, Davina [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=66fecfe52dc84d8db7ab0859adee8426-Marraccini, Davina]
Subject: News Clippings July 5, 2018 -- Full Stories

State

MDEQ grants provide cleaner school buses
Daily Journal

On Monday, the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality announced that it is dividing \$295,920 into grants for new school buses. Three school districts receive \$28,640 while 14 others will be given \$15,000.

According to Monroe County superintendent Scott Cantrell, a basic school bus costs \$78,000. That's without tinted windows, a white roof or air conditioning. Adding those cooling measures can run the cost over \$90,000.

"We have some buses from 2005 that are still on the roads, but the condition all depends on miles," Cantrell said. "We'll have one route with 60 kids that may be 25 minutes long from the time you leave school to home. We'll also have a bus with 25 to 30 kids that's an hour and 40 minutes. Rural school districts provide different challenges."

Monroe County schools bought five school buses last summer without grant money and will purchase two more ahead of next school year. The money must go toward new buses instead of repairing an existing one. A government official will visit each district to make sure it disables one old bus before putting the money toward a new diesel-powered bus with stricter pollution controls.

The districts in Northeast Mississippi to receive money this week were:

- Alcorn School District – \$15,000
- Lee County School District – \$15,000
- Monroe County School District – \$15,000
- Pontotoc City School District – \$15,000
- Pontotoc County School District – \$15,000
- Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District – \$15,000

The initiative is aimed at reducing emissions of particulate matter, hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide. In order to apply for a grant, school districts had to adopt anti-idling policies. Stricter emissions standards for diesel engines, including school buses, were implemented by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 2007.

"We apply for these grants every year. I'd say we received three of them over the past six years," Lee County superintendent Jimmy Weeks said. "The purpose is the newer buses are more environmental friendly and cost us less in gas and repairs."

Since 2009, the MDEQ Diesel School Bus Replacement Program has awarded over \$1.08 million to 38 school districts for the purchase of 67 school buses.

http://www.djournal.com/news/mdeq-grants-provide-cleaner-school-buses/article_9490a3d2-71f9-5f5d-bf60-3ff8c10467d7.html

MDEQ gives grant money for school buses
WJTV

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality is going into the car business. Why? As part of an effort to reduce emissions in the environment.

MDEQ will be granting nearly \$300-K to seventeen school districts for school buses. Districts include, Lawrence, Leake and North Pike County School Districts. The new buses will be powered by diesel, this particular type of vehicle will have more pollution controls
<https://www.wjtv.com/news/state/mdeq-gives-grant-money-for-school-buses/1281620978>

State Handing out Money for Cleaner Burning School Buses

Delta Daily News

Sventeen school districts are receiving money for new school buses as part of a Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality program that replaces older buses with new diesel-powered buses with more stringent pollution controls to reduce emissions. Since 2009 the MDEQ Diesel School Bus Replacement Program has awarded over \$1 million to 38 school districts to buy 67 school buses. Of the nearly \$300,000 awarded this year, \$15,000 is going to Coahoma Early College High School for one new bus; the North Bolivar Consolidated district also is getting \$15,000 for one new bus while the Cleveland and Greenville districts will receive \$28,640 for two busses each.
<http://deltadailynews.com/state-handing-out-money-for-cleaner-burning-school-buses/>

USDA Rural Development has funds for water and wastewater infrastructure

Pontotoc Progress

The Mississippi Office of USDA Rural Development has more than \$100 million in funds available for Fiscal Year 2018 to assist Mississippi communities of up to 10,000 in population for the planning and construction of drinking water and sanitary wastewater disposal systems. In certain instances, funds can be used to refinance existing debt on these systems in order to help systems save money. Funds are available for use by public bodies, non-profits, and tribal governments.

"USDA Rural Development's mission is to improve the economy and quality of life in rural America, and a critical aspect to rural prosperity is a safe and affordable water supply," said USDA Rural Development State Director, John Rounsaville.

"We urge Mississippi communities and water associations to take advantage of these resources."

To learn more about USDA programs, please contact Rural Development's Starkville Area Office at 662-323-8031, or the Community Programs specialists in the State Office in Jackson at 601-965-4316. You can also visit Rural Development's website at www.rd.usda.gov/ms.
http://www.djournal.com/pontotoc/usda-rural-development-has-funds-for-water-and-wastewater-infrastructure/article_5e026c28-ea7d-5869-b3fa-bafc2d6ff398.html

Wildlife department halts killing deer for CWD testing

Clarion Ledger

According to the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, the active killing of deer to test for chronic wasting disease has ended.

"For right now, yes, we have ceased active shooting operations," said Russ Walsh, MDWFP Wildlife Bureau executive director. "Response operation samples as of June 19 were 481."

The 481 deer were taken within a 25-mile radius of where a dead deer was found in Issaquena County that tested positive for CWD. According to the department, the deer was a free-ranging buck. The 4½-year-old buck died of natural causes and was collected by MDWFP on Jan. 25. It is the first case of the disease in the state.

Testing was performed to examine the deer's DNA. Results showed the DNA was consistent with the local population. A second CWD test was also performed and it confirmed the deer was CWD-positive.

Other tissue samples have been collected statewide from roadkill, hunter harvests and deer that were reported to be sick. So far, no other CWD-positive deer have been found.

"We're over 1,800 deer statewide since October 1, still only the one positive," Walsh said.

Because the 25-mile radius extends into Louisiana, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries also conducted testing within the CWD Management Zone. Three hundred deer were tested from East Carroll, Madison and Tensas parishes. None of the test results were positive.

Why kill?

The killing of deer for CWD testing has raised anger among some hunters. Many have asked why doesn't the department tranquilize deer rather than kill them. According to Walsh, that's really not an option.

"There is no approved live deer test for CWD," Walsh said. "The only approved method is testing retropharyngeal lymph nodes or the obex, which is the base of the brain stem, and the only way to get those is through a deceased deer."

CWD explained

The disease is caused by a protein called a prion that has morphed into an abnormal shape. When introduced to a host, it causes healthy prions to become abnormally shaped. As the rogue proteins accumulate, they begin killing cells in the host's brain.

Infected animals lose weight, lose their appetite, and develop an insatiable thirst. They tend to stay away from herds, walk in patterns, carry their heads low, salivate, and grind their teeth. Once contracted, the disease is always fatal, although death may not occur until 16 to 24 months later, or more.

The disease only affects members of the cervidae family which includes animals such as white-tailed deer and elk. It is thought to be spread by direct and indirect contact with infected individuals. To date, CWD has not been found in humans, but officials warn against consuming meat from an infected animal.

Possible ban changes

After the discovery of CWD in Mississippi, supplemental feeding of wildlife, man-made mineral sites and use of supplemental feed for camera surveys were banned in the six counties that are included in the management zone in an effort to slow the spread of the disease.

Also, hog trapping regulations changed in the affected six counties, which are Claiborne, Hinds, Issaquena, Sharkey, Warren, and Yazoo. Hog trapping is allowed, but trappers must obtain a free permit from the department and placing bait outside the trap is banned. Since no additional cases of the disease have been found, hunters have been asking if the bans will be lifted. Walsh said those and other questions regarding the 2018 deer season should be answered soon.

"We should have the final details this week," Walsh said on Monday. "Hopefully, we'll have that to the Commission (on Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks) at the July commission meeting."

Hunter help

Walsh said sampling efforts will be ramped up during deer season, but MDWFP needs hunter cooperation in providing the samples.

"We're going to encourage the public as much as possible to provide samples," Walsh said.

"We're going to need a certain amount of samples within the zone and we'll need samples north and south of there. We want the public to be engaged in this effort."

Hunters on social media have expressed reluctance to provide samples fearing that if a positive deer is found on their hunting land, MDWFP will automatically come to their land and kill deer for additional samples. Walsh said that's not how it works.

"If we were going to be on private property we had signed consent forms from the landowners allowing us to do that," Walsh said. "We would never just show up and start doing that. We haven't and we won't."

<https://www.clarionledger.com/story/sports/outdoors/2018/07/04/chronic-wasting-disease-cwd-deer-hunting-mississippi/754170002/>

RED SNAPPER SEASON TO CLOSE ON SUNDAY

WXXV

The state recreational fishing season for red snapper will close in Mississippi territorial waters on Sunday, July 8th at 11:59 p.m. and reopen on Monday, July 23rd at 12:01 a.m.

According to the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, during the closure, no red snapper shall be harvested, landed, or possessed in the state of Mississippi under the current guidelines of the exempted fishing permit.

For anglers that are fishing neighboring states, EFP seasons for red snapper, they must launch and land their vessel in that state while complying with all regulations pertaining to that state's EFP season.

The federal charter for-hire red snapper season will continue as scheduled.

<https://www.wxxv25.com/2018/07/03/red-snapper-season-close-sunday/>

Deep Sea Fishing Rodeo future unsure after tough financial year

WLOX

Attendance at this year's Deep Sea Fishing Rodeo was very poor. Bad weather, and the fact that the Fourth of July is in the middle of the week made for a bad combination.

"The rodeo has taken about a \$60,000 loss and that's mighty hard to come back from," said rodeo president Richard Valdez. "Today, we have to make that up through the gate and beer and Coke sales to be able to survive another year."

Valdez said the rodeo had to close down early and often because of the storms.

"The crowds would start coming in and the rain would come in on top of us," he said.

"Lightning, storming here shut our midway down, shut our entertainment stage down."

Valdez said the rodeo organization is going to need some help to keep the 71-year-old event going.

"The rodeo has survived a lot. Hopefully, we can survive this. We just need a lot of support from our city and county if they want to continue it," he said. "The rodeo brings in a lot of tourism dollars in and maybe we need to try to get some of those tourism dollars down here. As of right now, we're getting none."

There are 40 vendors from five different states, while many are down in profits, some were prepared.

"I had already downsized my forecast based on the way the holiday falls," said vendor Michael Colborn. "But the last two days have been a lot stronger than I anticipated, even with the rain. So, I'm in the black now and today is the icing on the cake."

Jason Kiffe's business was slower than normal, but he knows how important this rodeo is.

"The Deep Sea Rodeo is always a good event," Kiffe said. "Good for family. Good for friends and fellowship. You get to see some great fish and you get to hear some good fishing stories."

Wesley Simms of Ocean Springs is among the thousands who come nearly every year.

"I think it's good for the economy and I think they should bring it back," he said. "A lot of people look forward to this and I think it's a real good thing."

Valdez said there will be a meeting Thursday with the rodeo board of directors, and he'll know better then what the future holds for the tournament.

<http://www.wlox.com/story/38574564/deep-sea-fishing-rodeo-future-unsure-after-tough-financial-year>

Regional

Breakdown: African dust causes air quality problem in Memphis

WMC

MEMPHIS, TN (WMC) -You may have noticed a hazy sky this past weekend. Monday, the Shelby County Health Department issued a statement of poor air quality for parts of the Mid-South.

It was all due to Saharan dust.

Here's what it is, where it came from, and why you need to know about it:

Saharan dust comes from the Sahara Desert in the northern parts of Africa. Most of the dust originated from the Bodele Depression in a country called Chad and traveled over 5,000 miles to the U.S.

Strong winds lifted the Saharan dust into the upper part of the atmosphere, where stronger upper level winds carried this dust thousands of miles in "whichever way the wind blows." In this case, it blew west across the Tropic Atlantic Ocean, into the Caribbean, and up to us through the Gulf of Mexico, carried by high pressure.

Here in Memphis, skies were hazy due to those dust particles high in the atmosphere. When concentrations of Saharan dust become high it can cause problems to those that have asthma, heart conditions, the elderly, children, and those with lung conditions. However, they also create beautiful sunrise and sunset photos perfect for that new Facebook or Instagram post.

<http://www.wmcactionnews5.com/story/38569871/breakdown-african-dust-causes-air-quality-problem-in-memphis>

Community raises alarms about potential cancer link to water contamination ABC

Whitney Prieto was diagnosed last September with stage 2B triple negative breast cancer. She was 35, early in her pregnancy with twins and said she had no family history or genetic mutations that could make her especially susceptible to the serious disease.

Prieto said that she knew of six or seven classmates from Satellite High School in Satellite Beach, Florida, who were also diagnosed with uncommon cancers when she was diagnosed but that she now knows of about 20 -- all at about the same time.

She said the types of cancer being diagnosed in her classmates, now in their 20s and 30s, raised a red flag, but particularly concerning was what she read in an article in the Military Times in April.

The article reported that wells used to monitor groundwater contaminants at nearby Patrick Air Force Base showed levels of chemicals from military firefighting foam higher than what the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) considered safe.

Prieto is demanding the state find out if the test results and cancer rates among her and her former classmates are connected.

"We could all be linked because of this common source and from there it's just, it's amazing how many stories we have now," she said, adding, "It's alarming, it's very alarming, and the information that's come out in these citizen meetings, it's eye-opening."

The chemicals found in the groundwater wells at Patrick Air Force Base go by the acronyms PFOS and PFOA. Both are suspected of harming development in children, interfering with hormones or cholesterol levels, affecting the immune system or increasing the risk of cancer, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

But the situation in Satellite Beach is not clear cut. The EPA's recommended limit for PFOS and PFOA is specific to drinking water, but the tests at Patrick Air Force Base involved groundwater at the base.

A spokeswoman for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection told ABC News that drinking water systems in Brevard County, which includes Satellite Beach, tested negative for PFOS and PFOA.

When potentially dangerous levels of PFOS and PFOA were discovered in drinking water supplies at 19 military installations the Air Force moved to clean them up. But it hasn't yet done the same for groundwater unless nearby residents were also using it as drinking water. The Air Force has been investigating PFOS and PFOA at all its facilities since about 2010 and began to replace firefighting foam that includes the chemicals.

The Air Force did not comment for this story but Maureen Sullivan, deputy assistant secretary of defense for environment, safety and occupational health, told Military Times the Defense Department has made changes at bases where drinking water was affected by contamination "to cut off human exposure as soon as possible," but it could be years to address cleanup of the groundwater around the bases.

The science on connections between PFOS and PFOA exposure and cancer and other health problems is also not definitive.

Some research has linked the chemicals to cancer in animals, including a recent government study that found they caused health problems in animals at exposure levels much lower than the EPA's recommended limit.

But the same study said researchers can't conclude that what happened with animals would be the same for humans.

One of Prieto's classmates, Julie Greenwalt, was diagnosed with cancer of the appendix two years ago. A radiation oncologist, she is now recovered.

"I definitely think it's just so suspicious that all of us got diagnosed within a couple of years of each other, which means we were all exposed around the same time," she told ABC News. Greenwalt said she's become the face of residents' concerns that there is a connection between PFAS and cancer, and that since the Military Times article, people have called her at her clinic saying they want to get their own water or blood tested. She said one resident was going door-to-door with the article to share it with neighbors who don't use social media. "I feel like Erin Brockovich," Greenwalt told ABC News, referring to the environmental activist whose fight with a utility company over contaminated water was the subject of a movie starring Julia Roberts.

Greenwalt has been talking to the city of Satellite Beach and the state health and environmental departments -- all looking into citizens' concerns.

And while the Environmental Protection Agency is still working on regulations to address emerging concerns about PFOS and PFOA, around the country communities like Satellite Beach are dealing with fear.

Almost all Americans are exposed to some amount of these chemicals, according to a 2007 study, but recent testing by local governments and the Department of Defense has found hot spots where the levels are much higher.

Dangerous PFAS levels have been identified in at least 190 communities around the country and in tests at 126 military facilities, according to information compiled by researchers at Northeastern University and the Environmental Working Group, leading to calls for the government to regulate and clean up the chemicals.

For example, all 28 groundwater wells tested at Patrick Air Force Base, near where Prieto lives, showed potentially harmful levels of PFOS and PFOA, ranging from 71 parts per trillion -- just slightly over the EPA's acceptable limit -- to as high as 4.3 million parts per trillion.

And even though PFOS and PFOA chemicals haven't been used in manufacturing in years, they have been found in groundwater and drinking water systems around the country. PFOS and PFOA chemicals got into the environment through firefighting foam the Air Force used starting in the 1970s. The chemicals, also used in hundreds of waterproofing products like nonstick pans, Teflon and Scotchguard, also have seeped into the water, soil or air from manufacturing facilities or spills.

When the EPA calculated its recommendation of how much PFOS or PFOA it was safe for humans to consume through drinking water it actually had to factor in that the majority of people's exposure to the chemicals is through sources other than water, such as their diet, dust or even products used on carpets and furniture.

In Satellite Beach, Prieto and Greenwalt are speaking to more than 1,400 residents and past residents about their concerns that groundwater contamination is somehow related to their cancers or cancer in their family. The state environmental department and health agency are collecting information from residents to determine the next steps and the city has agreed to test more groundwater wells for PFOS and PFOA.

Prieto said she is pushing to get their story out and make sure any connection between water contamination and cancer in the community isn't pushed under the rug.

"It's time to try to be heard, and bring awareness to this issue. I have a younger sister that went to that high school, the problem we have now is we're all being diagnosed at these young ages and there's no screening," she said.

"Unfortunately we're losing people and that shouldn't be happening."

<http://abc7.com/florida-community-raises-alarms-about-potential-cancer-link-to-water-contamination/3702323/>

Hurricane season now expected to be below-average, forecasters say; here's why

The Advocate

In a turnaround, forecasters now believe this year's hurricane season will be less destructive than they previously thought, and it may even be a below-average showing.

In April, conditions looked ripe for a particularly strong hurricane season, wrote a team from Colorado State University, which each year prepares long-term outlooks. The next month, the National Hurricane Center also warned coastal residents to prepare for an active season. But in an update this week, CSU dropped the chances that many tropical systems will form before the season ends Nov. 30. They're forecasting 10 named storms, four hurricanes and one major hurricane, which is a Category 3 or higher.

"The tropical and subtropical Atlantic is currently much colder than normal, and the odds of a weak El Niño developing in the next several months have increased," wrote forecast authors Philip Klotzbach and Michael Bell.

Warm water nurses hurricane formation, while El Niño sends shearing winds down the Atlantic that shred tropical storms. Last year El Niño didn't form, contributing to the high number of storms, but if El Niño does form this year, it will help keep the hurricanes at bay. Meteorologists give a 50-50 chance that El Niño shows up by fall, said Louisiana state climatologist Barry Keim. Even a weak system will shear storms, diminishing if not dispersing them outright, he said.

It's easier to count on sea temperatures to stay cool. When the surface of the Atlantic loses heat, less water evaporates that can form into the clouds that make up tropical storms. Cool water has less energy and contributes to higher pressure, all of which dampen storm formation, Keim said.

Klotzbach and Bell point out that while they're forecasting only one major hurricane, the storm would have a 75 percent chance of striking the U.S. CSU engineers have also noted that systems like Hurricane Sandy can cause devastation, even if they aren't considered major hurricanes by a measure of their wind speed.

ck by devastating storms even in quiet years: Audrey in 1957, Camille in 1969 and Andrew in 1992 all immediately came to mind.

A tropical disturbance is currently hanging off the Louisiana coast. The National Hurricane Center doesn't expect it to coalesce into anything too impressive, but they do expect it to cause thunderstorms for several more days, and it could interfere with Independence Day festivities.

"Scattered to numerous showers and thunderstorms will continue to be possible each day through early next week, primarily during the afternoon and early evening hours each day. A few storms could be strong each day and produce frequent lightning, gusty winds and locally heavy rainfall," the local National Weather Service office wrote in its hazardous weather outlook.

https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/environment/article_e03a4572-7ed8-11e8-9d93-a3f403404687.html

Former state lawmaker testifies he was paid to oppose EPA

AP

BIRMINGHAM, ALA.

Former state Rep. Oliver Robinson testified Tuesday that he accepted money to oppose federal environmental cleanup efforts in north Birmingham, telling jurors that in doing so that he felt like he sold out the people who had elected him.

Robinson, a former basketball star and one-time rising star in the Alabama House of Representatives, took to the witness stand as a disgraced politician. He is a key witness for prosecutors trying to prove that two attorneys with a prominent Alabama law firm and a coal company executive paid bribes to Robinson, in the form of a consulting contract, in the hopes of avoiding clean-up costs at a Birmingham Superfund site.

News outlets reported that Robinson described an agreement for a consulting contract.

"They wanted me to use my influence as a legislator to talk to neighborhood presidents, local politicians, state politicians, church leaders, anybody that would be in favor of opposing the EPA," Robinson testified, according to ABC 33/40.

Robinson, who pleaded guilty last year to bribery and tax evasion, said he felt that he had sold out the people who had elected him to the Alabama Statehouse, the station reported. The testimony came in the second week of the bribery trial of lawyers Joel Gilbert and Steven McKinney and Drummond Co. vice president David Robertson. The three have maintained their innocence, with defense lawyers suggesting in opening statements that Robinson is trying to reduce his prison sentence by misrepresenting what happened.

The trial touches both the Alabama Statehouse and a prominent Alabama coal company and law firm, Balch & Bingham.

EPA officials had designated an area in Birmingham as a Superfund site because of elevated levels of arsenic, lead and other chemicals. In 2013 they notified a division of Drummond Coal Co. it was one of five companies potentially responsible for the pollution. The EPA said in 2014 that it was considering adding the site to the national priority list and expanding it into other neighborhoods.

Al.com reported that Robinson described how he met with EPA officials and an environmental group using talking points from Gilbert and spoke before the state environmental agency.

Defense attorneys on Tuesday began what is expected to be a rigorous cross-examination of Robinson.

Defense attorney Jack Sharman, in questioning Robinson, noted that Robinson hopes to get a reduced sentence by cooperating with prosecutors.

Defense lawyers will continue to cross-examine Robinson on Thursday.

Robinson had served in the Alabama House of Representatives from 1998 until his sudden resignation in 2016. Robinson was a standout basketball player at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and played a season with the NBA's San Antonio Spurs.

<https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/business/article214327429.html>

National

Official: Pruitt 'inching forward to the tipping point'

CNN

Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt, facing additional reporting about his many controversies, is "inching forward to the tipping point," a senior administration official said.

The official, describing the feeling within the administration towards Pruitt, wondered whether the EPA administrator would still hold his job as he could crop up in Democratic candidates' ads hitting President Donald Trump's "swamp."

Ultimately, the decision is with Trump.

White House deputy press secretary Hogan Gidley told reporters on Tuesday that Trump is looking into the "numerous reports" about Pruitt.

"The President feels as though Scott Pruitt has done a really good job with deregulating the government, to allow for a thriving economy, that's important to him, but these things matter to the President as well, and he's looking into those," Gidley said. "When we have an announcement, we'll make it."

Trump said in early June that Pruitt was "doing a great job within the walls of the EPA," while acknowledging his EPA chief's mounting controversies.

"I mean, we're setting records," Trump said. "Outside, he's being attacked very viciously by the press. I'm not saying that he's blameless, but we'll see what happens."

But the remark from the administration official underscores growing concern about Pruitt as recent reporting highlights accounts from aides about his conduct and use of aides for personal errands.

Kevin Chmielewski, former deputy chief of staff for operations, is expected to testify before Congress and told CNN that Pruitt and his aides used "secret" calendars and schedules to hide his contacts with industry representatives and others.

Pruitt's former top policy adviser Samantha Dravis met with the House Oversight Committee last week, and The Washington Post and The New York Times reported that Dravis told congressional investigators that Pruitt asked her to reach the Republican Attorneys General Association about a job for his wife. Both papers wrote that Dravis said she declined the request, citing concerns about violating The Hatch Act.

And CNN reported Tuesday that Pruitt had previously approached Trump in the Oval Office, asked Trump to fire Attorney General Jeff Sessions and offered to replace Sessions as head of the Justice Department on a temporary basis.

The latest headlines compound an already serious situation for Pruitt, who has faced a series of inquiries from Congress, the EPA's inspector general and outside watchdog groups.

Questions have swirled for much of his tenure about his security detail, his use of official resources for personal ends and his renting of a room in Washington for \$50 a night from a lobbyist couple

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/07/04/politics/scott-pruitt-trump-administration-ethics/index.html>

Trump to pick Wyoming park boss to lead National Park Service: report

The Hill

President Trump is expected to tap David Vela, the superintendent of Wyoming's Grand Teton National Park, to lead the National Park Service (NPS).

Greenwire reported the pick Tuesday, citing several sources familiar with the matter. NPS, the Interior Department and the White House did not respond to requests for comment.

Vela told the news outlet that he is "deeply humbled by the rumors and speculation and, if true, would be honored to serve."

The Trump administration's agenda for the NPS has centered largely on strategies for tackling its \$11.6 billion maintenance backlog.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke wants to take a portion of increased energy production revenues and put them toward NPS maintenance. Numerous Republican lawmakers, as well as some Democrats, support the plan.

NPS is also trying to crack down on a decades-old pattern of alleged sexual harassment and assault among workers. Zinke has set a "zero tolerance" policy for harassment and assault and fired workers accused of misdeeds.

NPS, which manages more than 400 parks and numerous other sites, has been without a Senate-confirmed director since Jonathan Jarvis, the director throughout the Obama administration, left in January 2017.

NPS is currently being led by deputy director P. Daniel Smith, who took over in January from Michael Reynolds, the previous acting director.

Vela would be the NPS's first Hispanic director. He has worked at NPS since 1981, save for an 11-year break to work in other government positions.

Vela has been the top official at Grand Teton and its John D. Rockefeller Jr. Memorial Parkway for four years. He's also worked in a senior position at NPS headquarters in Washington, D.C., and as director of the agency's southeast region.

<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/395438-trump-to-pick-wyoming-park-boss-to-lead-national-park-service>

Connect with us



Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality | 515 East Amite Street, Jackson, MS 39201

[Unsubscribe marraccini.davina@epa.gov](mailto:marraccini.davina@epa.gov)

[Update Profile](#) | [About our service provider](#)

Sent by rwilbur@mdeq.ms.gov in collaboration with



Try it free today